

Alan Sinfield (Sussex University)

Deputy editor

Lindsay Smith (Sussex University)

North American associate editor

Jean E. Howard (Columbia University)

Reviews editor

Peter Nicholls (Sussex University)

Editorial board

Isobel Armstrong

John Barrell

Gillian Beer

Homi Bhabha

Fred Botting

Malcolm Bowie

Rachel Bowlby

Joseph Bristow

Laura Chrisman

Teresa de Lauretis

Jonathan Dollimore

James Donald

John Drakakis

Terry Eagleton

John Frow

Paul Hamilton

Terry Hawkes

Linda Hutcheon

Cora Kaplan

Declan Kiberd

Siobhán Kilfeather

Ania Loomba

Anne McClintock

Sally Munt

Richard Ohmann

David Rogers

Simon Shepherd

Jenny Taylor

Textual Practice

Contributions should be double spaced, and two copies should be sent. Address: Alan Sinfield, Textual Practice, Arts B, Sussex University, Brighton BN1 9QN, England.

Books for review should be addressed to Peter Nicholls, Arts B, Sussex University, Brighton BN1 9QN, England.

Advertisements. Enquiries to Routledge Journals, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE, UK; e-mail jadvertising@routledge.com

Textual Practice is published three times a year, in spring, summer and winter, by Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE. All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted, reproduced or utilized in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author(s) and publishers, but academic institutions may make not more than three xerox copies of any one article in any single issue without needing further permission.

Subscription rates (calendar year only): UK full: £70.00; UK personal: £26.00; Rest of World full: £75.00; Rest of World personal: £26.00; USA full: \$75.00; USA personal: \$45.00. All rates include postage; airmail rates on application. Subscriptions to: Subscriptions Department, Routledge Journals, Cheriton House, North Way, Andover, Hants SP10 5BE. Sample copy requests, e-mail sample.journals@routledge.com

ISSN 0950-236X

Phototypeset by Intype London Ltd.

Printed in Great Britain by Bell & Bain Ltd, Glasgow, UK.

© Routledge 1996

| | |
|---|-----|
| Roger Sales | |
| Fred Inglis, <i>Raymond Williams</i> | 562 |
| Paul Edwards | |
| Bonnie Kime Scott, <i>Refiguring Modernism</i> | |
| T.E. Hulme, <i>The Collected Writings of T.E. Hulme</i> | 566 |
| Abstracts and keywords | 575 |
| Index | 579 |

Vijay Mishra

The diasporic imaginary: theorizing the Indian diaspora*

In the arcade of Hanuman House . . . there was already the evening assembly of old men . . . pulling at clay *cheelums* that glowed red and smelled of ganja and burnt sacking. . . . They could not speak English and were not interested in the land where they lived; it was a place where they had come for a short time and stayed longer than they expected. They continually talked of going back to India, but when the opportunity came, many refused, afraid of the unknown, afraid to leave the familiar temporariness.¹

In the larger narrative of global migrations and diasporas I would want to situate a diaspora of which, in complex ways, I have been/am a part. This is the Indian diaspora of around nine million about which not much of a theoretical nature has been written. In the lead essay in the foundation issue of the journal *Diaspora*, William Safran for instance devotes a mere twelve lines to the Indian diaspora and not unnaturally oversimplifies the characteristics of this diaspora.² Unlike most other diasporas whose first movement out of the homeland can no longer be established with absolute precision, the Indian diaspora presents us with a case history that has been thoroughly documented. This is largely because the Indian diaspora began as part of British imperial movement of labour to the colonies. The end of slavery produced a massive demand for labour in the sugar plantations and Indian indentured labourers were brought to Trinidad, Guyana, Surinam, Mauritius, Fiji and South Africa. There were also movements of labour to East Africa, Sri Lanka and Malaya to work on the railways, tea and rubber plantations respectively. This narrative of diasporic movement is, however, not continuous or seamless as there is a radical break between the older diasporas of classic capitalism and the mid- to late twentieth-century diasporas of advanced capital to the metropolitan centres of the Empire, the New World and the former settler colonies. Since these are two interlinked but

historically separated diasporas, I would want to refer to them as the old ('exclusive') and the new ('border') Indian diasporas. Furthermore, I would want to argue that the old Indian diasporas were diasporas of exclusivism because they created relatively self-contained 'little Indias' in the colonies. The founding writer of the old Indian diaspora is, of course, V.S. Naipaul. The new diaspora of late capitalism (the diaspora of the border), on the other hand, shares characteristics with many other similar diasporas such as the Chicanos and the Koreans in the US. The new Indian diaspora is mediated in the works of Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Meera Nair, Rohinton Mistry, M.S. Vassanji, Gurinder Chadha, Meera Syal and others. These writers/film-makers speak of a diaspora whose overriding characteristic is one of mobility.³ Where the diaspora of exclusivism transplanted Indian icons of spirituality to the new land – a holy Ganges here, a lingam or a coiled serpent there – the diaspora of the border kept in touch with India through family networks and marriage, generally supported by a state apparatus that encouraged family reunion. Diasporas of the border in these Western democracies are visible presences – 'we are seen, therefore we are', says the Chicano novelist John Rechy⁴ – whose corporealities carry marks of their hyphenated subjectivities. But elsewhere too, in Fiji or in Singapore, the state insists on diasporic identifications as its citizens, for demographic calculations and, in Fiji, for racialized electoral rolls, are always ethnic subjects. In Singapore the government prides itself on its CMIO (Chinese–Malay–Indian–Other) model of ethnic taxonomy which valorizes and transcodes, along racially essentialist lines, the specificities of communal experience even as the nation-state struggles to establish the primacy of the transcendent Singaporean citizen. For these hyphenated bodies (in spite of the enlightened ethos of citizenry) an extreme form of double consciousness occurs whenever the views of the dominant community begin to coincide with the rhetoric of what Sartre once observed as the racist question about the presumed ultimate solution of diasporas: 'What do we do with them now?' For diasporas this question always remains a trace, a potentially lethal 'solution', around which their selves continue to be shaped. Before continuing with the archaeology of the Indian diaspora in some detail I would want to pause here to advance a general theory of the diasporic imaginary that could act as a theoretical template for the rest of this paper.

The diasporic imaginary and its pretexts

The diasporic imaginary is a term I use to refer to any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or because of the political self-interest of a racialized nation-state, as a group that lives in displacement.⁵ I use the word 'imaginary' in both its original Lacanian sense and in its more flexible current usage, as found in the works of Slavoj Žižek. Žižek defines the imaginary as the state of 'identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing "what we would like to be"'.⁶ In a subsequent application of this theory to the nation itself, Žižek connects the sublime idea of what he calls the 'Nation Thing' to the subject's imaginary identification with it. The 'nation' (as the 'Thing') is therefore accessible to a particular group of people of itself because it needs no particular verification of this 'Thing' called 'Nation'.⁷ For this group the 'nation' simply *is* (beyond any kind of symbolization). Now in this construction of the 'Nation Thing' the nation itself is a fiction since it is built around a narrative imaginatively constructed by its subjects. The idea of the homeland then becomes (and here the terms 'imaginary' and 'fantasy' do coalesce), as Renata Salecl has pointed out, '[a] fantasy structure, [a] scenario, through which society perceives itself as a homogeneous entity'.⁸ We can follow up Salecl to make a more precise connection between a general theory of homelands (which is what I have done so far) and a theory of the diasporic homeland. Salecl refers, after Lacan, to fantasy as something that is predicated upon the construction of desire around a particularly traumatic event. The fantasy of the homeland is then linked, in the case of the diaspora, to that recollected moment when diasporic subjects feel they were wrenched from their mother(father)land. The cause may be the traumatized 'middle passage' of slave trade or the sailing ships (later steamships) of Indian indenture, but the 'real' nature of the disruption is not the point at issue here; what is clear is that the moment of 'rupture' is transformed into a trauma around an absence that because it cannot be fully symbolized becomes part of the fantasy itself. Sometimes the 'absence' is a kind of repression, a sign of loss, like the Holocaust for European Jews after the war, or the Ukrainian famine for the Ukrainian diaspora. To be able to preserve that loss, diasporas very often construct racist fictions of purity as a kind of jouissance, a joy, a pleasure around which anti-miscegenation narratives of homelands are constructed against the reality of the homelands themselves. Racist narratives of homelands are therefore part of the dynamics of diasporas, as imaginary homelands are constructed from the space of

distance to compensate for a loss occasioned by an unspeakable trauma.

The hypermobility of postmodern capital and ideas, and especially their ready dissemination on electronic bulletin boards (the internet, etc.) have the effect of actually reinforcing ethnic absolutism because diasporas can now connect with the politics of the homeland even as they live elsewhere. The collapse of distance on the information highway of cyberspace and a collective sharing of knowledge about the homeland by diasporas (a sharing that was linked to the construction of nations as imagined communities in the first instance) may be addressed by examining the kind of work Amit S. Rai has done on the construction of Hindu identity.⁹ His research explores the new public sphere that the Indian diaspora (or any diaspora for that matter) now occupies as it becomes a conduit through which the conservative politics of the homeland may be presented as the desirable norm. In Rai's exploration of six internets – soc.culture.indian, alt.hindu, alt.islam, soc.culture.tamil, su.orig.india, and INET – he finds that many of the postings indicate a desire to construct India in purist terms. It is an India that is Hindu in nature and one in which secularism is simply a ruse to appease minorities. In its invocations of important Indian religious and cultural figures – Vivekananda, R.C. Dutt, etc. – the subtext is always a discourse of racial purity ('we must go to the root of the disease and cleanse the blood of all impurities', said Swami Vivekananda) and the sexual threat to Hindus posed by the Muslims in India. The double space occupied by the diaspora (multicultural hysteria within the US and rabid racial absolutism for the homeland) is summarized by Rai as follows:

Finally, this textual construction of the diaspora can at the same time enable these diasporics to be 'affirmative action' in the United States and be against 'reservations' in India, to lobby for a tolerant pluralism in the West, and also support a narrow sectarianism in the East.¹⁰

Although Rai's conclusions may be suspect – the postings need not lead to the correlation he discovers – it should be clear from the foregoing that diasporas construct homelands in ways that are very different from people of the homelands themselves. For an Indian in the diaspora, for instance, India is a very different kind of homeland than for the Indian national. At the same time the nation-state as an 'imagined community' needs diasporas to remind it of what the idea of homeland is. Diasporic discourse of the homeland is thus a kind of return of the repressed for the nation-state itself, its pre-symbolic

(imaginary) narrative, in which one sees a more primitive theorization of the nation itself. Thus both the Jewish and gypsy diasporas – two extreme instances of the diasporic imaginary – have been treated by nation-states with particular disdain because they exemplify in varying degrees characteristics of a past that nation-states want to repudiate. For Franz Liszt the gypsy diaspora was a 'crisis for Enlightenment definitions of civilization and nationalist definitions of culture'.¹¹ The Jews, equally a problem but with an extensive sense of history and civilization, carried all the characteristics of an ethnic community (*ethnie*) and thus were both an earlier condition of the European nation-state as well as its nemesis.¹² If the gypsies were read as the absolute instance of a nomadic tribe ('a dirty gypsy' is a term of abuse in both Hungary and Romania), the profound historicity of the Jewish people gave the Jewish diaspora a specially privileged position in diasporic theory. Diasporic theory then uses the Jewish example as the ethnic model for purposes of analysis or at least as its point of departure.¹³ But Jewish diasporas were never totally exclusivist – 'not isolation from Christians but insulation from Christianity' was their motto, as Max Weinreich put it¹⁴ – and met the nation-state half-way in its border zones. Jewish 'homelands', for instance, were constantly being re-created: in Babylon, in the Rhineland, in Spain, in Poland and even in America with varying degrees of autonomy.¹⁵ Movement ceased to be from a centre (Israel/Palestine/Judaea) to a periphery and was across spaces of the 'border'. Against the evidence, Zionist politics interpreted the Jewish diaspora as forever linked to a centre and argued that every movement of displacement (from Spain to France, from Poland to America) carried within it the trauma of the original displacement (such as that from Judaea to Babylon).¹⁶ In retrospect one can see how readily such a logic would erase the idea of nation as 'palimpsestic text' and replace it with the idea of nation as a racially pure ethnic enclave. In a very significant manner, then, the model of the Jewish diaspora is now contaminated by the diasporization of the Palestinians in Israel and by the Zionist belief that a homeland can be artificially reconstructed without adequate regard to intervening history.¹⁷ The theoretical problematic posed here is not simply Zionist. In no less a novel than George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, the 'Jew' signified world-historical questions of exile.

We need to keep the Palestinian situation in mind in any theorization of diasporas even as we use the typology of the Jewish diaspora to situate and critique the imaginary construction of a homeland as the central *mythomoteur* of diaspora histories.¹⁸ The reason for this is that displaced Palestinians and their enforced mobility force us to

distinguish between the Zionist project of Israel and the historically deterritorialized experiences of Jewish people generally. Echoing Max Weinreich, the latter point is made by Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin,¹⁹ who reread the Jewish diaspora through a postcolonial discourse where Jewishness is seen as a disruptive sign in the mosaic of history and an affirmation of a democratic ethos of equality that does not privilege any particular ethnic community in a nation.²⁰ Against the Zionist fictions of a heroic past and a distant land, the real history of diaspora is always contaminated by the social processes that govern their lives. Indeed, the features of diasporas found in the writings of Gellner, Hobsbawm, Smith and Safran²¹ become an 'insufferable' aspect of their lives only when a morally bankrupt nation-state asks the question, 'What shall we do with them?' As the exemplary condition of late modernity, diasporas 'call into question the idea that a people must have a land in order to be a people'.²² Of course, the danger here is that diasporas may well become romanticized as *the* ideal social condition (though many multicultural nations must come to terms with it) in which communities are no longer persecuted. As long as there is a fascist fringe always willing to find racial scapegoats for the nation's own shortcomings and to chant 'Go home', the autochthonous pressures towards diasporic racial exclusivism will remain. To address real diasporas does not mean that the discourses which have been part of diaspora mythology (homeland, ancient past, return and so on) will disappear overnight. Under a gaze that threatens their already precarious sense of the 'familiar temporariness', diasporas lose their enlightened ethos and retreat into discourses of ethnic purity that are always the 'imaginary' underside of their own constructions of the homeland.

The old Indian diaspora: 'the familiar temporariness'

Postcolonial theory has drawn its source texts as well as its cultural dynamism from diasporic archives.²³ Most of the claims about the need for a vigorous postcolonial intervention into the project of modernity, however, have taken the form of interventions from the diaspora within the West or from what I have called the new Indian diaspora of the border. This diaspora has been seen as a powerful source for diasporic discourses of disarticulation (abandonment, displacement, dispersion, etc.) as well as a 'site' for the rearticulation of an intercultural formation through which global migration, the positioning of identities, the nature of the bourgeois subject (have diasporas been instrumental in decentering the bour-

geois subject in the first place?) may be interrogated. However, the homogenization of all Indian diasporas in terms of the politics of disarticulation/rearticulation with reference to Britain, America or Canada has led to the fetishization of the new diaspora and an amnesiac disavowal of the old. Though less visible these days than the new in the story of modernity, the old Indian diaspora nevertheless constitutes a fascinating archive that can be placed relatively unproblematically alongside the 'normative' Jewish experience, because in this instance too a by and large semi-voluntary exodus of indentured workers began to read their own lives through the semantics of exile and dispersion ('exile is the nursery of nationality', wrote Lord Acton²⁴). Without meaning to transvalue uncritically the old Indian diaspora – though transvalue we must in the long run – what is striking is the relative absence of critical cultural histories of this diaspora.²⁵ Neither Hugh Tinker's sister volume to his magisterial *A New System of Slavery*²⁶ nor K.L. Gillion's sequel to his path-breaking study of Fiji's Indian migrants²⁷ places the story of indenture in the pre-existent narrative(s) of diaspora. Indeed, what we have here is one of many subaltern historicities waiting to be reopened.

Begun in the 1830s with a first consignment of indentured labourers to Mauritius, the system of indentured labour was to continue until 1917, by which time around a million people had been transported from India (largely from the Hindi-speaking North) to Mauritius, South Africa, Trinidad, Guyana, Surinam and Fiji to help produce the pre-eminent stimulant, sugar, 'an indispensable additive to sauces and pastry', for the swelling ranks of a tea-drinking and chocolate-eating leisured class in the West.²⁸ Large numbers of South Indians came to work on the tea estates of Sri Lanka and on the rubber plantations of Malaysia. Small numbers of Punjabis (mainly Sikhs) went to East Africa, Canada and California as well. Many Gujarati Indian free traders also came in the wake of indenture. I have little to say about these latter groups.²⁹ What interests me are the old Indian diasporas of the sugar plantations, because they do make up a single group of dispersed and territorially disaggregated bodies who share many of the characteristics of the so-called ideal type of the Jewish diaspora mentioned by William Safran, though it must be added that their diasporic unity is *post facto* because the indentured labourers ranged from the aboriginal Dhangars of Chota Nagpur to the caste-conscious Rajputs and Brahmins of Oudh. In another respect too the original migrants of this diaspora constitute, collectively, a remarkable archive because their emigration passes have been preserved. In the archives of Suva, Georgetown, Port Louis, Port of Spain and at the Documentation Centre in Durban one can

read the names of the migrants, their caste, their parents' names, their skills, if any, their religion and so on. Here is an example of a typical emigration pass written for Dhowray, an indentured labourer on the first ship to Fiji in 1879:

MAN.

Ship's Name Leonidas
Ship's No. 410

Fiji Emigration Agency
CALCUTTA, the 28th February 1879

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Depot No | 572 |
| Name, | Dhowray |
| Caste, | Bahalia |
| Father's Name, | Naipaul |
| Age, | 25 |
| Zillah, | Soultanpur |
| Pergunnah, | Mosaferkhana |
| Village, | Dihirioura |
| Occupation, | Laborer |
| Name of next of Kin | Naipaul Father Dihirioura |
| If married, to whom, | - |
| Marks, | 5-5 |

Certified that I have examined and passed the above-named as a fit Subject for Emigration, and that he is free from all bodily and mental disease and has been Vaccinated.
Sgd. Surgeon Superintendent.

Sgd. Depot Surgeon

I hereby certify that the man above-described (whom I have engaged as a laborer on the part of the Government of Fiji where he has expressed a willingness to proceed to work for hire) has appeared before me and the Protector of Emigrants, who has explained to him all matters concerning his duties as an Emigrant, according to Section XXXVIII of the Indian Emigration Act No. VII of 1871.

Sgd. Protector of Emigrants, Calcutta.

Sgd. Govt: Emigration Agent for Fiji

Since almost all the members of the old Indian diaspora can trace their lineage back to a name on one of these emigration passes, the act of displacement meant that they were entering, for the first time, a form of historical subjectification for which in their homeland there was no precedent. Inadvertently the subaltern enters Western imperial

history because the emigration passes break away from an 'ahistorical' continuum and start another in which a documentary archive becomes decisive. However, in spite of a lot of personal documentation (much more than one would find on a birth certificate, for instance) what the emigration passes do not indicate are the sources of the diasporic subject: widows escaping from real or implied sati, women coerced into marrying older men, men who had been excluded from inheritance, boys brought up by stepmothers, men and women who may have defied the severe norms of a largely illiterate heterosexual society and, finally, the role of professional Indian recruiters, who received the princely sum of £3 per recruit, as complicit functionaries of the Raj.³⁰ These are the occluded, material history of the old Indian diaspora found in the margins of the emigration passes. I don't think we can overlook this other history of the diaspora. Given the relationship between the 'recruiters' and their 'victims' (many later migrants recalled the false promises made by these 'recruiters', though one suspects that real or imagined belief in being tricked is part of the narrative of a lost homeland anyway³¹), and given the wretched conditions of transport, it is hardly surprising that memory is often mediated by realities which many Europeans involved in these voyages (doctors, captains) compared to the middle passage of slavery.³² The indentured labourers were transported in the hulks of ships, 300 to 400 to a ship in the first fifty years, twice that number in subsequent years, single men and single women divided by married couples and children in the between decks, for a journey that would last at least three months. There was a sense of collective drama as one post was left for another. Labourers waded through knee-deep water after reaching the lagoons on lifebuoys. The repetitive nature of this disembarkation meant that people could refer to it as the moment of origin or genesis in the new land. Apart from the bonding possibilities of this act, the colonial documentation of the event meant that for the first time Indian subalterns became historical subjects. Since, as we have said, their names, their villages, their castes and their parents' names were recorded on emigration passes this motley crowd entered for the first time the regulative history of the Empire. Yet there is no subaltern Marlow who has recounted the first encounter with these outposts of Empire, even though scattered and fragmented oral accounts of some of the indentured labourers have survived in folk stories and songs. All that remained was the memory of the passage and a loss that could only be sustained through the categories of myth. The sailing ship (and after 1880 the steamship) became as important a site for purposes of legitimation as the motherland itself. The bonds created through the *jahaji bhai* ('ship-

brotherhood') confraternity led to social configurations that were not unlike those of the village networks in India, but much more radical because this was the first space in which the Indian labourers had to face the reality of losing caste as a consequence of crossing the *kalapani*, the black sea.

Another spatial connection in this old diaspora was established through the uniform nature of the food. Since food rations on the sugar plantations were identical for all indentured Indian labourers throughout the colonies, food linked the old Indian diaspora from Surinam to Mauritius to Fiji.³³ The weekly rations made up of rice, dhal, sugar, tea, dried fish, atta (flour), salt, oil and half a pound (about 250 grams) of mutton on weekends produced an indenture cuisine that has survived to this day.

First meal: black tea, roti with fried or curried vegetables or a chokha (cooked aubergines)

Midday meal: boiled rice with dhal and bhaji (vegetables)

Evening meal: roti and tarhari (curry) with black tea

Midday meals (weekends): usual midday meal with fish and/or mutton

There is a particular food called dhal-puri that is made of dhal (lentils) placed between two layers of flour rolled into a large roti or pancake, like a fajita, that clearly grew out of the limited culinary combinations possible on a staple diet based on the weekly rations. In Trinidad the dhal-puri is sold in shops called 'Bus(t) Up Shut' because, as they explain in Trinidad, when you crumple a dhal-puri in your hand, it opens up. The move from dhal-puri to the calypsonian 'bus(t) up shut' is part of the larger process of creolization or hybridization that leads to interracial interactions between diasporas, in this instance between Afro-West Indians and East Indians of Trinidad. As a fast food available in the 'Bus(t) Up Shut' shops, the dhal-puri is an 'essential item on social/festive occasions irrespective of ethnicity'.³⁴ What one begins to see is the immense social mobility of culture-specific food. It is precisely this fluidity – and the contaminated/contaminative space occupied by the Indian diaspora and diasporas generally – that makes essentialist readings of diasporic histories (readings along regressive nationalist lines) so difficult to understand. In the old Indian diasporas Indians transformed the physical and cultural landscapes to such an extent that these landscapes are now meaningless without reference to them. Names of places, the vocabularies of local languages, as well as the existence of so many exotic flora and fauna (mango, mynah, bulbul, mongoose, jackfruit, and many more) attest to their enormous impact. In this respect the old

Indian diasporas 'read' these landscapes in ways in which the new have only just begun to do. In the wake of military *coups* (Rabuka's in Fiji) and repressive regimes (Burnham in Guyana) the old Indian diaspora, once freakish travellers because rural Northern India had no significant tradition of travel beyond those of itinerant singers, sadhus and ghummakars,³⁵ has now become one of the most mobile communities in the world.³⁶

Many of the issues canvassed here come together in the works of V.S. Naipaul, the founder of a creative discourse for the Indian diaspora of exclusiveness. Central to Naipaul's diasporic discourse is an agitation about home. As he says in *A Turn in the South* (1989), 'Howard had something neither Jimmy nor I had, a patch of the earth he thought of as home, absolutely his'.³⁷ In his magnificent *A House for Mr Biswas* (1961), memories are not simply 'internalized and endlessly reproduced' but progressively 'mediated'.³⁸ In this novel, descendants of Indian indentured labourers (the Tulsi extended family) insulate themselves within the thick brick walls of Hanuman House, itself a spatial metaphor of an epic that they memorially reconstructed. In this space are located metonymic fragments of the Tulasidasa vernacular *Ramayana* (composed in Samvat 1631 or 1574 CE):³⁹ Tulsi, the matriarch named after the author of this *Ramayana*, Lanka, the kitchen area at the back named after Ravana's kingdom, and so on. In the words of Amitav Ghosh, the house celebrated in V.S. Naipaul's novel becomes 'an infinitely reproducible space' that is never left behind.⁴⁰ Infinitely reproducible space, yes, but the space of the novel is also an arena where the history of the old diaspora is played out (the work's connections with Naipaul's own personal history is obvious) as well as some of its peculiarly diasporic tendencies. Mr Biswas's rejection of the Tulsi matriarchal household is as much a reaction against the very un-Indian system of 'the *ghar-damada* or the son-in-law in his in-laws' family'.⁴¹

The mobility of the space of India, and its reconstructions through acts of pseudo-sacralization (after Mircea Eliade) explains why the classical linear narrative of return one associates with the Jewish diaspora is replaced by a spatio-temporal dimension in which the Tulsi house in *A House for Mr Biswas* aspires to the lost 'condition' of India while at the same time replicating that space.⁴² Centres and peripheries – motherlands and diasporas – thus enter into relationships of mutual reinforcement as well as uncanny displacement. This hawker-like capacity to carry one's ancestral baggage around, this capacity for re-spatialization, however, needs to be tempered by an account of the strong reverse millennial trend, the double consciousness, of the old Indian diaspora. V.S. Naipaul care-

fully brings the space of the ships and the memory of the passage into the Tulsi household itself though not through any extensive contextual remembrance of the event. Instead, the Indian past exists in the rituals of religion and eating (the Tulsi household's breakfast of biscuits and tea was not uncommon on the ships), in the names of the characters and in the extended family structure that insulates the community. However, Amitav Ghosh's case for a complete spatial displacement does not mean that India is therefore completely erased in Trinidad just because local symbols overtake those of the motherland. On the contrary, strong millennialist world-views remain. Conflating nativism and the idea of the sacred, millennialist world-views steadfastly refuse contamination and hybridity: everything has to be re-imaged through concepts of purity. In the old Indian diaspora the Hindus even created the *Ramayana* (Tulasidasa's version) as the book for the Hindu diaspora when in fact Hinduism has no one book; it is polytheistic in every sense of that word. But to accept myths as fact (as present-day Mauritian Indians are trying to do through cultural amnesia) is to forget that diasporic communities are always hyphenated: notice the hyphenated ethnicities of the Fiji-Indian, the Trinidadian-East Indian, the Mauritian-Indian, etc. The hyphen is that which signifies the vibrant social and cultural spaces occupied by diasporas in nation-states as well as their ever-present sense of the 'familiar temporariness'. It also reminds us of the contaminated, border, hybrid experience of diaspora people for whom an engineered return to a purist condition is a contradiction in terms. And these questions get inflected differently in the new Indian diasporas of late capital. Here the routes are more complex as the metaphor of travel is not keyed in the space of ships; rather the ship is only one of many means of transport. Legitimate permanent residency visa holders get mixed up with travellers who cross borders (West Indies-Canada-America; Mauritius-France-America) or who are in transit from one place to another. The cultural logic of the new Indian diaspora has to be located in the idea of the hyphen itself, in what may be called the epistemology of borders. Whereas the Fiji-Indians had no identity problem as such because, at least before Rabuka, the Fijian state was not officially defined in terms of any privileged race, the new diaspora must make meaning of the hyphenated subject within a nation-state that always privileges the citizen who is not hyphenated.⁴³ To theorize the new Indian (or for that matter any late modern) diaspora, one has first to think through the semantics of the hyphen.

The law of the hyphen and the new Indian diaspora

In classical epistemologies, the law of genre and the law of the hyphen are mutually exclusive: where the law of genre aspires to the condition of purity ('thou shalt not mix genres'), the law of the hyphen jostles to find room for the space occupied by a cipher that is yet to be semanticized, the dash between the two surrounding words. It is a law that has been applied to literary forms which fail to fit into generic taxonomies of literature (tragi-comedy, Gothic-romance, etc.). Within a nation-state citizens are always unhyphenated, that is, if we are to believe what our passports have to say about us. In actual practice the pure, unhyphenated generic category is only applicable to those citizens whose bodies signify an unproblematic identity of selves with nations. For those of us who are outside of this identity politics, whose corporealities fissure the logic of unproblematic identification, plural/multicultural societies have constructed the impure genre of the hyphenated subject. But the politics of the hyphen is itself hyphenated because in the name of empowering people, the classification indeed disempowers them, it makes them, to use a hyphenated term, 'empoweringly-disempowered'. In her recent book, Kamala Visweswaran⁴⁴ makes an interesting diasporic intervention by briefly recounting the experience of children born to the second wave of Indian (read 'East Indian' throughout) migrants to the United States. These migrants (the 1960s in the States, Britain and Canada, the 1970s in Australia) had to raise their children in the West without, as Gauri Bhat notes, 'Indian friends, Bharatanatyam dance classes, Karnatic music recitals, Hindu temple societies, or Hindi films'.⁴⁵ The children growing up in this vacuum culture now constitute the first wave of US-born Indians in colleges, universities and the professions. But precisely because of their 'vacuum' upbringing they are the ones who are most aware of the relationship between diasporas, ethnicity and the nation-state and of the struggle to possess the 'hyphen'. Their race to occupy the space of the hyphen - Indo-Americans, Indian-Americans, Hindu-Americans, Muslim-Britons - signals the desire to enter into some kind of generic taxonomy and yet at the same time retain, through the hyphen, the problematic situating of the self as simultaneously belonging 'here' and 'there'. But as we have seen, the 'belonging there' part of the equation cannot be linked to a teleology of return because this belonging can only function as an imaginary index that signifies its own impossibility.

On the other hand, diasporic space as the space of the border, a space that is always contaminated, now engenders the possibilities of

exploring hybrid, cross-cultural and interdiasporic relationships. Note, for example, the impact on British Asian Bhangra (derived from a Punjabi folk form) of Caribbean reggae and the soul and hip-hop styles of black Africa, which are in themselves highly complex hybrid music, and of Bombay film music.⁴⁶ The music of Apache Indian, though already under fire from the 'Asian Cool' scene in Britain,⁴⁷ is a case in point. Asian bands such as KKKings, Fun'Da-Mental, Kaliphz and Loop Guru (post-Ravi Shanker music crossed with cyber-religion) are further evidence of Gilroy's persuasive argument that cultural commodities travel swiftly, criss-crossing geographical boundaries, creating new vibrant forms.⁴⁸ Black reggae and rap music exemplify this kind of cross-fertilization, though between white rock and punk there has been no easy synthesis of these two languages because each has been 'imprisoned within its own irreducible antinomies'.⁴⁹ But this does not disprove the Gilroy thesis which is really about trans-diasporic identifications; nor does it disprove that diasporic cultural forms 'are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments'.⁵⁰ Recently in the British Indian-Pakistani diaspora, even classical forms such as the Sufi qalandari dance and singing have been crossed with contemporary music with rare success by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.⁵¹

In the works of Bharati Mukherjee and Hanif Kureishi the schismatic break with India of the old diaspora is replaced by the idea of a homeland that is always present visibly and aurally (through video cassettes, films, tapes and CDs). The old diaspora broke off contact – few descendants of indentured labourers know their distant cousins back in India – the new incorporates 'India' into its bordered, deterritorialized experiences within Western nation states. The old Indian diaspora broke away from an oral history and entered imperial history as landless people became documented subjects on emigration passes. The people of the new Indian diaspora, recounts Mukherjee in her novel *Jasmine*, are of a different order:

But we are refugees and mercenaries and guest workers; you see us sleeping in airport lounges; you watch us unwrapping the last of our native foods, unrolling our prayer rugs, reading our holy books, taking out for the hundredth time an aerogram promising a job or space to sleep, a newspaper in our language, a photo of happier times, a passport, a visa, a *laissez-passer*.⁵²

There are names mentioned, countries, airports: the Middle East, Sudan, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paramaribo, Florida. Unmarked jumbos, leaking trawlers, the modern and the Conradian in a journey out of one heart of darkness into another. In her works people of

the Indian diaspora are part of a global odyssey as they renegotiate new topographies through the travails of travel. For women, in particular, the collective horror of a double oppression present in the old sugar plantations ('Cane Is Bitter' is the title of one of Samuel Selvon's stories)⁵³ is replaced by the constant abuse of their bodies as illegal migrants. Nevertheless, there are a number of facile equivalences that Mukherjee seems to maintain in *Jasmine* and in her other works that do not quite fit the real lives of diasporas. Following on Susan Koshy's essay these equivalences lead to three basic oversimplifications.⁵⁴ The first is a celebration of American assimilation rendered through the master narrative of the American romance: a girl from outside falls in love, traverses American space (Iowa's flatness reinforces this sense) and triumphs. The narrative of a triumphant feminism is possible because American assimilation is so totally democratic that Jasmine's ethnicity is never an impediment, which of course is a gross oversimplification of the degrees and levels of compromise (of their cultural baggage generally) that women of colour have to undergo in America. There are also, as Susan Koshy suggests, crucial erasures of differences between 'refugees like Du, illegal entrants like Jasmine, and the post-1965 wave of middle-class, highly educated professionals from Asia'.⁵⁵ Finally there is little by way of a contestation of the idea of a subject. The norm seems to be the Western bourgeois subject, without its Enlightenment capacity for self-reflection. Cultures can assimilate only if they recognize this lack and compensate for it through a narrative of assimilation.

The mobility that Bharati Mukherjee writes about has a more interesting history in the Indo-Pakistani (or South Asian) diaspora of Britain which is itself a product of a much larger movement of labour from the former colonies to European metropolitan centres from the mid-1950s (the expansion of the motor car industry) to the early 1970s (the oil crisis of 1973), a period during which European governments supported and even encouraged businesses and large corporations to seek cheap labour from abroad.⁵⁶ It seems clear that the design was to get people in as guest workers who, even after acquiring citizenship, would function very much like Abbé Sieyès's 'passive citizens' to be distinguished from 'active citizens'. In the cultural sphere active citizens represent the nation-state (in films, fiction, etc.) while passive citizens can participate but not offer themselves as models of the nation.⁵⁷ When the nation, however, discovered that its passive citizens need to be integrated – European cities now house something like sixteen million non-Europeans, about two million of whom live in Britain – its policies collided with a prior theory of the national subject and with the hyphenated identities of

its passive citizens because the nation-state's integrationist policy had no effective theory of multiculturalism. The conflict between a presumed passive citizenry and an actively engaged hyphenated subject in diaspora as a border zone, as an intermediate, increasingly mobile idea, forms the energizing context for Hanif Kureishi's films.

Race, postcoloniality and panic dis(b)orders: Hanif Kureishi

Bodies after all do matter. In Hanif Kureishi's films about London suburbia, race and postcoloniality, these complex agendas are hoisted upon diasporic bodies on display. The Indian diaspora, especially, has had its bodies (as 'passive citizens') displayed only to itself through the sanitized modalities of Bombay (Bollywood) popular cinema.⁵⁸ Diasporic cinema of Kureishi's or Gurinder Chadha's *Bhaji on the Beach* (1995) gives the diaspora not only images of its own self but also images that require high levels of proactive critical engagement in the first place. Moreover, these bodies are now exposed to general public consumption and are no longer commodities that circulate, like Bombay films, only in the diaspora itself. Hanif Kureishi's films effectively began this process of engagement.⁵⁹ Both *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1987) explore the complex mechanics of politics, sexuality, culture, race and capital in the British-Pakistani diaspora. The terms 'Pakistani' and the racist 'Paki' are here used for that million strong group of people who migrated to Britain from the Indian subcontinent and from the overseas Indian diaspora (the old diaspora of exclusivism) from the 1960s onwards. More specifically beneath the gaze of a much more sinister and prolonged form of racism under Thatcherism this diaspora began to articulate their lives through the schizophrenic discourses of exile. Kureishi writes:

And indeed I know Pakistanis and Indians born and brought up here who consider their position to be the result of a diaspora: they are in exile, awaiting return to a better place, where they belong, where they are welcome. And there this 'belonging' will be total. This will be home, and peace.⁶⁰

The cinematic energy of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (*MBL*) may be located between the new brand of resurgent racism under Thatcherism and the desire for fictitious homelands on the part of the Indian-Pakistani diaspora. The two are interrelated, each feeding upon the other, each implicitly responding to the nationalist agendas of the other, and both getting the more complex ways in which ethnicity,

race, class and power interact so fatally wrong. In *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (*SRGL*) these complex interactions are exposed as the diasporic imaginary is deconstructed to show how the gaze of the Other gets mediatized through the body itself. In the inner-city suburbs of Britain, diasporic purities can neither sustain nor redeem. But in *MBL*, where the lyrical vision is much tighter and where gay sexuality attempts to transcend racial barriers, Kureishi's immediate concern is with the twilight zone of the British hybrid, both racially and socially. Hanif Kureishi's reading of the diaspora does not offer simple oppositions, a secure older diasporic generation against a misguided new one, an ancient *dharma* against language games, family enterprise against the individual (Salim berates Omar for not relying on the family), the 'stick to your own kind, one of your own kind' argument popularized through the reactionary liberalism of Roger Scruton (*The Meaning of Conservatism*) and Enoch Powell against non-conformity and the postcolonial hybrid. Indeed, the new cosmopolitanisms of Europe will make these essentialist oppositions quickly out of date. Against these binarisms Kureishi stages the triumph of the hybrid, the power of the in-between to express the new and to occupy a space from which a critique of the old may be mounted. But as the representation of the unspeakable, the articulation of social interactions made more unrepresentable because of the race factor, *MBL* is a major postcolonial text that takes as its departure point the racial implications of Adela Quedstedt's panic amidst the 'boom boom' of the Marabar Caves, E.M. Forster's own homosexuality and, more importantly, the many gay relationships that the Empire spawned as white men and women compromised God and King for native delights. In Kureishi, the centre of the text is to be located firmly in the narrative of bodies. So as to heighten the immense radicality of this move, Kureishi chooses the Omar-Johnny homosexual relationship over any number of heterosexual ones (Rachel-Nasser, Tania-Johnny, Tania-Omar) as the core of his cinema.

Representations of sexuality and race are necessarily at the centre of Hanif Kureishi's works because these representations signify the presencing of the diasporic body (as real, tangible, material things) in racialized Britain. Unlike Rushdie, who comes to England as a migrant and keeps his links to his Indian homeland intact, Kureishi is the first-generation British hybrid, born in fact before coloured migrations really got under way. The year of his birth, 1955, would be almost identical with one of Rafi's (the corrupt Pakistani politician in *SRGL*) own student years in England. Thus what we have here is the hybrid moving through a complex series of racist British discourses, from the assimilationist discourse of the 1950s to the new,

though equally racist, multicultural discourses of the 1970s and beyond. What reverberate powerfully in *MBL* and *SRGL* are the more subtle versions of racism that began to articulate themselves since the 1971 immigration act which restricted the right to abode in Britain to 'patrials' thereby bringing an end to 'primary black immigration'.⁶¹ In these versions – especially strong during the Thatcher ascendancy – the discourse of racism was grafted on to homophobic rhetoric (and vice versa) to endorse the idea of the national good so powerfully captured in Thatcher's voice-over towards the end of *SRGL*. The manner in which the two – homophobia and racism – were deployed and effectively homogenized through a seemingly non-racist, non-sexist discourse is one of the great triumphs of the Thatcher era and explains why people who may have otherwise voted for Labour continued to support Thatcher. She very successfully presented herself as the upholder of precisely those colonial virtues the diaspora least wished to hear about. To get our perspective on Hanif Kureishi right we must look at the debates around the British new racist movement. In what follows I am deeply indebted to Anna Marie Smith's insightful essay.⁶²

The late 1960s saw the emergence of a new racism in Britain for which Enoch Powell was the best-known, but not the only, spokesperson. In what seemed like a remarkable reversal of old Eurocentric and imperialist readings of the black colonized as racially inferior, the new racists began to recast races on the model of linguistic difference. This 'difference', however, had to be anchored somewhere, and the easiest means of doing this was by stipulating that nations were not imagined communities constructed historically but racial enclaves marked by high levels of homogeneity. Thus a race had a nation to which it belonged. The British had their nation and belonged to an island off the coast of Europe, and so on. In the name of racial respect and racial equality, this version in fact gave repatriation theorists such as Enoch Powell a high level of respectability in that, it was argued, what Powell stood for was not racism but a nationalism which the immigrants themselves upheld. The case is seductive and, on the surface, alarmingly persuasive but what the argument simplified was the history of imperialism and the massive displacement of races that had taken place in the name of Empire. Nowhere was this more marked than in the Indian, African and Chinese diasporas of the Empire. More importantly, however, the new racism was used to defend Britishness itself, to argue that multiculturalism was a travesty of the British way of life, which was now becoming extremely vulnerable. The only good immigrant was one

who was totally assimilable, just as the only good gay or lesbian was someone who led a closet life. Writes Anna Marie Smith:

Only the thin veneer of deracializing euphemisms has shifted over this period, with blatantly racist discourse on immigration being recoded in discourse on criminality, inner cities' decay and unrest, anti-Western terrorism, and multiculturalism. Indeed, the fundamentally *cultural* definition of race in the new racism allows for this mobile relocation of the racial-national borders to any number of sociopolitical sites.⁶³

What the establishment does, for example, is to construct a new 'sociocultural imaginary' based on the work ethic and a white British familial nation. It becomes clear that Kureishi's decisive intervention takes place precisely when the Thatcherite agenda of new racism and the British state is at its strongest. While recounting the development of *SRGL*, Kureishi wrote in his diary:

21 May 1987 Frears [Stephen Frears the director] and I were both moaning to each other about the Tory Election broadcast that went out yesterday. Its hideous nationalism and neo-fascism, its talk of 'imported foreign ideologies like socialism' and its base appeals to xenophobia.⁶⁴

More importantly, however, Kureishi does the unspeakable act of forcibly representing two discourses that had been useful means of misidentification and collusion on the part of the establishment. The political imaginary (vote for Thatcher because she alone knows the middle cause that would save Britain from the multiculturalists, vote for Thatcher because she mediates between the 'white fascists [the National front] and the black extremists')⁶⁵ now becomes a very real world in which the homosexual and the black heterosexual function in the same economic and social twilight zone. It must be said that Thatcher did not present this as a clear-cut ideological position; on the contrary, Thatcherism encouraged such a high level of apathy among the British by creating unemployment and rewarding those whose support she needed that people simply did not put their minds to 'productive political uses'.⁶⁶

To open a cinematic space for the conjunctures outlined above, Kureishi uses the (diasporic) body as the border zone where transgressions occur. So Kureishi now stages, from the establishment's perspective, extreme aberrations: black and white homosexuality; black and white heterosexuality; black upon white upon black heterosexuality. On top of all this he stages the most 'venomous homophobic representations' during the Thatcher years, that of the

black lesbian. In *SRGL* the black lesbian category itself is blasted open even further through the lesbian relationship of the Afro-British and the Indian- (or Asian-)British. What happens to the diasporic body, that element in the British Asian life that had been totally repressed or replaced by the imperial discourses of cultural extraneity or religious fundamentalism? At the time of the most virulent expressions of the new racism, British television and film also produced some of the most elaborate accounts of India and the Empire. From *The Jewel in the Crown* to *A Passage to India*, the diaspora's real history within Britain was being deflected on to an epic past that endorsed the civilizing values of the British. As Lord Halsbury stated during a reading of a bill prohibiting the promotion of homosexuality in Britain, 'We have for several decades past been emancipating minorities who claimed that they were disadvantaged. Are they grateful? Not a bit. We emancipated races and got inverted racism.' He went on to use the same analogy to criticize homosexuals. At home the diaspora were no longer in need of emancipation of the type suggested by Lord Halsbury. But they were still being seen, as Halsbury saw homosexuals, as people whose bodies should remain closeted, whose corporeal identities should remain hidden or cosmetically represented through a nostalgia for the Raj. In both *MBL* and *SRGL* the counter-discursive move on the part of Kureishi is in fact to make bodily contacts a feature of the diaspora and to rewrite, in short, narratives of native bodies as they interact with the Other. From Nasser's relationship with Rachel and Tania's self-exposure at the party, to the sex scenes in *MBL* and *SRGL*, one experiences a move away from the new racist assumptions about the diaspora to the complex ways in which the bodies of the diaspora now interact with itself and with the emergent colours and races in Britain. In staging these relationships, Kureishi disrupts the silent ('unpresentable') multiracial sexuality of the past (and that of Rafi and Alice) with the more complex and raw (almost savage) sexuality of the postcolonial diaspora. It is this staging (marked so dramatically in the condom over the carrot scene, and Rafi's incongruous placement in it, in Rosie's three types of the human kiss and in Vivia and Rani's lesbian love scenes) that disrupts the calculus of the new racism but also establishes conjunctures between racist and homophobic discourses at the heart of Tory British culture.

Kureishi's staging of the narratives of the Indo-Pakistani diaspora in Britain brings out the complex dynamics of diasporas of the border. It is also the staging of the scene of the return of the repressed in the British nation-state whose own history had been enacted elsewhere: 'The trouble with the English', stutters S.S. Sisodia, 'is that

their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means.'⁶⁷ But the lifting of the lid on the repressed narrative of the diaspora, the giving of voice to people whose history had been snatched away from them and whose bodies were never given artistic representation as real, lived bodies in the nation-state, also means that a key missing element in modernity – the epistemology of border culture – can be retheorized. Here Ramón Saldivar's demand for the 'unique positionality of Chicano subjects' is an important analogy to keep in mind. Whereas we can use the normative narratives of immigrant experience to 'provide the etiologies of identity' for the Indian diaspora of exclusivism, the new Indian diaspora's bordered, transcultured subjects are, as Saldivar argues, 'metaleptic figures (who) exist on a much more problematic and unstable ground of heterogeneous determinations and crisscrossed negations'.⁶⁸

Conclusion: postmodern ethnicity

Towards the end of *The Satanic Verses* one suspects that the author himself intercedes to distinguish between selves who wish to remain 'continuous' and those who are creatures of 'selected discontinuities'.⁶⁹ Diasporas of exclusivism – the old Indian diaspora – for reasons linked to the nature of late nineteenth-century imperialism remained largely 'continuous'. In these self-enclosed societies (Naipaul defends the subject matter of his Trinidadian novels precisely on these grounds) diasporas, in Rushdie's words, 'wished to remain... continuous'. In the later diaspora – the new Indian diaspora – of border culture the ground of being for diasporic subjects is not only unstable but openly contaminated. Gibreel, Rushdie's 'continuous' subject, recasts the sacred text of Islam in the hope of connecting with the master inter-text. Saladin, the subject of 'selected discontinuities', is the unreliable pastiche through whom Rushdie writes 'a love-song to our mongrel lives'.⁷⁰

Recent diasporic theory has come to read diasporas as exemplary social, cultural and even political conditions of late modernity. It is an attractive argument if only because it moves diaspora theory away from the earlier semantics of fossilization and the 'fragment society' to one where we begin to see diasporas as deterritorialized peoples for whom belonging is not linked to the control of the nation's social, political and cultural myths. Lest we accept this as the normative diasporic condition (after Boyarin and Boyarin, Clifford and even Gilroy), the study of our two Indian archives reminds us that diasporas never really lose the essentialized narratives of exile, homeland

and return. The diasporic subject like Edward Said's 'exile' knows that 'in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity.'⁷¹ Though neither the achievement of a new homeland nor a return to the old ever really happens (the Jewish example is an exception here), the language of reverse millenarianism is periodically invoked whenever the community itself feels threatened or is afraid that its practices of insulation have been unsuccessful. Thus the old Indian diaspora replicated the space of India and sacralized the stones and rivers in the new lands. But the new also retreats into its religious texts and draws strength from its priesthood when it finds the discourses of liberalism ineffectual. The Rushdie Affair is the most dramatic instance of this because the publication of *The Satanic Verses* was seen as a massive threat to the diaspora's own walls of insulation. It was therefore hardly surprising that the language used for lambasting Rushdie was almost identical with the language of separatism and return that characterized the old Indian diaspora. The democratic impulse of diasporas thus has an underside that explodes, under duress, under the imaginary gaze of the Other, into the semantics of exclusivism and separatism: 'the tragedy of multiplicity destroyed by singularity, the defeat of Many by One', writes Salman Rushdie in *The Moor's Last Sigh*.⁷² At these moments the fantasy structure of the homeland appears as the imaginary haven, as the sublime sign, an absence, to which diasporas return for refuge. In this respect the Indian diaspora plays out its own repressed narrative of resistance to individuation, resistance to forced removal from the mother. In the old Indian diaspora this absence had become a true fantasy because India had no real, tangible existence in the socio-political consciousness of the people. Its 'reality' existed only in colonial newspapers that few could read and even fewer could afford.⁷³

In addressing the Indian diaspora as two interrelated diasporic conditions (of exclusivism and border), I have gone beyond a purely heuristic desire for a neat taxonomy. I have drawn attention to the complex procedures by which diasporas renegotiate their perceived moment of trauma and how, in the artistic domain, the trauma works itself out. It remains to be said that the diasporic imaginary is a particular condition of displacement and disaggregation; it is a theoretical template through which we can understand what is becoming a defining feature of the late modern world. This is not to say that the nation-state is dead; rather the narrative of diasporas confirms that postmodern ethnicities are here to stay. After all, the postmodern

nation-state is a complex socio-economic formation with multiple cultural repertoires in which diasporas are always provisionally and problematically inserted.

Murdoch University

Notes

*Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Feminist Studies/Cultural Studies Colloquium Series, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2 February 1994 and at the 7-8 August 1995 Workshop on Diasporic and Multicultural Approaches to South Asian Studies held at the Australian National University. I would like to thank Ien Ang, Abigail Bray, Iain Chambers, James Clifford, Christopher Connery, Vijayandran Devadas and Krishna Somers for dynamic interactions.

- 1 V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas*; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), pp. 193-4.
- 2 William Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies: myths of homeland and return', *Diaspora*, 1. 1 (Spring 1991), pp. 83-99. Dispersal, collective memory, sense of alienation, sanctity of the ancestral homeland and a belief in its restoration, definition of the self in terms of identification with this homeland, are seen as the six key characteristics of diasporas. It is obvious that Safran uses the Jewish model as the norm. Although Safran concedes that the Indian diaspora is a genuine diaspora in several respects (the characteristics imputed to this diaspora are, however, oversimplified: middlemen role, long history, integrationist and particularist foci), he does not take up many of its self-evident features (homeland myth, insecurity).
- 3 The South Asian ('Indian') diaspora is conservatively estimated at nine million: Europe 1,500,000 (1,300,000 in Great Britain), Africa 1,400,000 (1,000,000 in South Africa), Asia 2,000,000 (1,200,000 in Malaysia), Middle East 1,400,000 (largely guest workers in the Gulf States), Latin America and the Caribbean 1,000,000 (largely in Trinidad, Guyana and Surinam), North America 1,200,000 (900,000 in the US), the Pacific 450,000 (300,000 in Fiji). These figures, slightly modified, have been taken from Benedict Anderson, 'Exodus', *Critical Inquiry* 20. 2 (1994), pp. 326-7, fn 23.
- 4 [Debra Castillo] 'Interview with John Rechy', *Diacritics* 25. 1 (1995), p. 113.
- 5 James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology* 9. 3 (1994), p. 310.
- 6 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 105.
- 7 Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 210-12. I owe this and the next reference to David McInerney. See his 'Nations before nationalism? A response to *Colonising Nationalism*', *Political Theory Newsletter* 7. 1 (1995), pp. 48-55.
- 8 Renata Salecl, *The Spoils of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 15.
- 9 Amit S. Rai, 'India on-line: electronic bulletin boards and the construction of a diasporic Hindu identity', *Diaspora* 4. 1 (1995), pp. 31-57.
- 10 Rai, p. 42.

- 11 Katie Trumpener, 'The time of the gypsies: a "people without history" in the narratives of the West', *Critical Inquiry* 18. 4 (1992), p. 860. The Third Reich killed 600,000 gypsies, almost one-third of the total population of European gypsies. In Romania, Slovakia, Germany and Hungary they still exist in the margins of mainstream cultural life.
- 12 Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 22–30, 117.
- 13 It need hardly be repeated that the word 'diaspora' is directly linked to Jewish history and until recently was identical with it. See Deuteronomy 28.25: 'thou shalt be removed into all kingdoms of the earth' [Authorized Version].
- 14 Quoted by Clifford, p. 326.
- 15 Anthony D. Smith, p. 117.
- 16 The breakdown of the Jewish population of about thirteen million is as follows: the US (5.6 million), Israel (4.4 million), the former Soviet republics (750,000), France (530,000), Russia (410,000), Canada (350,000), Britain (300,000), Australia (100,000), Germany (52,000), with smaller numbers in Latin America, New Zealand and Asia.
- 17 In 1914 the population of Palestine was around 690,000 of which fewer than 60,000 were Jews.
- 18 I follow Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980) at this juncture.
- 19 Daniel Boyarin and Jonathan Boyarin, 'Diaspora: generation and the ground of Jewish identity', *Critical Inquiry* 19. 4 (1993), pp. 693–725.
- 20 The difference between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews complicates a single narrative of Zionism.
- 21 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 22 Boyarin and Boyarin, p. 718.
- 23 This is obvious in the works of the master theoretician of postcoloniality, Homi Bhabha. See his *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- 24 Quoted by Anderson, p. 315.
- 25 See Brij Lal, *The Girmitiyas. A History of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra: South Asia Monographs, 1983); K.L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1962); B. Brereton and W. Dookeran, *East Indians in the Caribbean* (New York: Krauss, 1982); Morton Klass, *East Indians in Trinidad* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1988); Dwarka Nath, *A History of Indians in Guyana* (London: Dwarka Nath, 1950); Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).
- 26 Hugh Tinker, *The Banyan Tree. Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
- 27 K.L. Gillion, *The Fiji Indians. Challenge to European Dominance 1920-1946* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1977).
- 28 Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 333.
- 29 See N. Gerald Barrier and V. Dusenberry (eds) *The Sikh Diaspora* (Columbia, MO: South Asia Books, 1989).
- 30 Sir Henry Cotton, 'Indian indentured labour to other colonies', *The Indian Emigrant*, July 1915, p. 372. Quoted by Rhoda Reddock, 'Indian women and indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago 1845–1917: freedom denied', Third UWI Conference on East Indians in the Caribbean, 28 August–5 September 1984, University of West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad.
- 31 Two key terms that have entered the lexicon of the old diaspora are 'girmitiya' and 'arkhati'. The first is a neologism formed from the 'agreement' signed by the indentured labourers, the second is formed from the word 'recruiter'. See Klass, pp. 9–10 for an account of the extent to which third-generation Trinidadian Indians also began to accept as true the stories of deception played on their grandparents.
- 32 Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, p. 118.
- 33 See 'Appendix to Enclosure No. 17: Dietary Scale of the Mauritian Emigration Depot for Each Adult, signed by H. Burton, Colonial Emigration Agent.' No date. Mauritian Indian Museum, Moka, Mauritius, BIA/I.
- 34 G.M. Sammy, 'Transitional changes and merging of the eating pattern of the Trinidad East Indian', Third UWI Conference on East Indians in the Caribbean. This section on food is from my 'New lamps for old: diasporas migrancy borders', *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences* 2. 1 (1995), p. 153.
- 35 See Sanjay Srivastava, 'Awaras, ghummakars and LTC wallas: reflections on home and mobility in Indian life'. Paper delivered at the Diasporic and Multicultural Approaches to South Asian Studies Conference, ANU, Canberra, 7–8 August 1995.
- 36 The Afro-American intelligentsia has remained remarkably silent about the despotic nature of so many Afro-West Indian and African governments, and in particular of their treatment of people of the diaspora. See Cheddi Jagan, *The West on Trial* (Berlin: Seven Seas Books, 1980), p. 367.
- 37 V.S. Naipaul, *A Turn in the South* (London: Viking, 1989), p. 3.
- 38 Kavita Panjabi, 'Border writing: the multidimensional text' (review), *Letras femininas* 19. 1–2 (1993), pp. 140–3. Quoted by Carl Gutiérrez-Jones, 'Desiring B/orders', *Diacritics* 25. 1 (1995), p. 101.
- 39 The standard critical edition is Shambhu Narayan Chaube, *Ramcaritmanasa* (Kashi: Nagripracarini Sabha, 1948). The vulgate is readily available in innumerable editions. For a reasonably good translation see *The Ramayana of Tulasidasa*, trans. F.S. Growse (rpt Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978). The Hindu Samvat calendar is fifty-seven years ahead of the Gregorian.
- 40 Amitav Ghosh, 'The diaspora in Indian culture', *Public Culture* 2.1 (1989), pp. 73–8.
- 41 J.C. Jha, 'The Indian heritage in Trinidad,' in John La Guerre (ed.) *Calcutta to Caroni: East Indians in Trinidad* (St Augustine: University of West Indies Extra Mural Studies, 1985), p. 3.
- 42 See Paul Gilroy, 'Cultural studies and ethnic absolutism', in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler (eds) *Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 187–98 for a diasporic theory linked to the concepts of 'scatter' and 'evolution'.
- 43 For an examination of the hyphenated subject in Britain see Tariq Modood, *Not Easy Being British: Colour, Culture and Citizenship* (Oakhill, Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 1992).

- 44 Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
- 45 Gauri Bhat, 'Tending the flame: thoughts on being Indian-American', *COSAW Bulletin* 7. 3-4 (1992), p. 2. Quoted by Kamala Visweswaran.
- 46 Peter Manuel, *Cassette Culture. Popular Music and Technology in North India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 191.
- 47 Gina Morris, '... so what is this Asian Kool?' *Select* 48 (1994), pp. 48-52. I owe this reference to Jeremy Barth.
- 48 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- 49 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture. The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 70.
- 50 Clifford, p. 307.
- 51 For the strength of cultural music and music as affirmation of cultural difference see John Baily, 'The role of music in three British Muslim communities', *Diaspora* 4. 1 (1995), pp. 77-87.
- 52 Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989), pp. 100-1.
- 53 V. S. Naipaul, *The Middle Passage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 66.
- 54 Susan Koshy, 'The geography of female subjectivity: ethnicity, gender, and diaspora', *Diaspora* 3. 1 (1994), pp. 69-84.
- 55 Koshy, p. 79.
- 56 Maud S. Mandel, 'One nation indivisible; contemporary Western European immigration policies and the politics of multiculturalism', *Diaspora* 4. 1 (1995), pp. 89-103.
- 57 Mandel, p. 95.
- 58 The introduction of Hindi (Bombay) films in the diaspora with the arrival of the 'talkies' (*Alam Ara*, 1931) was a crucial factor in the continuation of culture and in the construction of the imaginary homeland as a homogeneous entity. In Fiji, cinema probably prevented the loss of Hindi/Urdu outright. The West Indies was not so lucky even though *Bala Joban* (1934), the first Hindi film shown there, had a great reception. See Ranjit Kumar, *Thoughts and Memories* (Port of Spain: Imprint Caribbean Ltd, 1981).
- 59 See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'In praise of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*', *Critical Quarterly* 31. 2 (1989), pp. 80-8.
- 60 Hanif Kureishi, *London Kills Me. Three Screenplays and Four Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p. 35. The script of *My Beautiful Laundrette* was first published in 1986, that of *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* in 1988, both by Faber & Faber, after the release of their filmic versions.
- 61 Anna Marie Smith, 'The imaginary inclusion of the assimilable "Good Homosexual": The British New Right's representations of sexuality and race', *Diacritics* 24. 2-3 (1994), p. 69.
- 62 Anna Marie Smith, pp. 58-70.
- 63 Anna Marie Smith, p. 62. This quotation and the paragraph that precedes it also appear in my 'Postcolonial differend: diasporic narratives of Salman Rushdie', *Ariel* 26. 3 (1995), p. 20.
- 64 Kureishi, 'Some time with Stephen' in *London Kills Me*, p. 186.
- 65 Anna Marie Smith, p. 66.
- 66 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology. An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 35.
- 67 Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), p. 343.
- 68 Ramón Saldivar, *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 283. Quoted by Gutiérrez-Jones, p. 103.
- 69 Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*, p. 427.
- 70 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta/Viking, 1991), p. 394.
- 71 Edward W. Said, 'Reflections on exile', *Granta*, 13 (1984), p. 166.
- 72 Salman Rushdie, *The Moor's Last Sigh* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p. 408.
- 73 The situation changed with better cable networks, the growth of literacy and the development of newspapers in the vernacular. In Fiji the Hindi weekly newspaper *Fiji Samachar* began in 1924 followed by *Shanti Dut* in 1935. Both these newspapers carried news from India.